

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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Markey Calls on Justice Department to Disclose Role in Detention and Alleged Torture of American in Saudi Arabia

Washington, D.C.—Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Democratic member of the House Homeland Security Committee, called for the Justice Department to fully disclose its role in the detention of an American, Ahmed Abu Ali, in Saudi Arabia. His lawyer has alleged that the Saudi Arabian government detained Mr. Abu Ali at the request of the Justice Department for terrorist ties.

“If this is true, this is another example of the Justice Department asking other countries to torture prisoners for us,” Markey said, adding, “But this time it involves an American citizen.”

Mr. Abu Ali was born in Houston and is from Falls Church, VA. He was detained in Saudi Arabia while he was taking a final exam at a Saudi University. He has been imprisoned for 18 months and reportedly tortured.

A lawsuit was brought by Mr. Abu Ali’s family in U.S. District Court asserting an opportunity to contest his detention in Saudi Arabia, noting the recent ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court this summer giving detainees in Guantanamo Bay the right to contest their detentions in court. The Justice Department argued that the United States judicial system could not review the case because Mr. Abu Ali was being held in Saudi Arabia. But District Judge John Bates rejected the U.S. Government’s position, saying “This position is as striking as it is sweeping,” adding that if allowed to stand unchallenged it would permit U.S. agencies to turn Americans over to foreign government for detention, interrogation or even torture.

Rep. Markey has been an outspoken opponent of “extraordinary rendition,” a practice engaged in by the U.S. Government to deport aliens detained in the U.S. to foreign nations known to practice torture. Rep. Markey has introduced legislation (H.R. 4674) to outlaw this practice, and fought successfully to strike language in the House version of the 9/11 bill that would have legitimized the outsourcing of torture.

“The Justice Department thinks it is okay to torture detainees, as long as it is done secretly in another country. Torture is morally wrong, no matter where it is done,” concluded Markey.

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